

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

COMPLETION OF NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEARNING SERVICE (NLS) RESTRUCTURE

The service has been restructured as part of the efficiency measures. There is a significantly smaller establishment reflecting the changes that have had to be made. Within the new service, staff have been allocated to community bases where appropriate in East and West Blackburn and Darwen and Rural. This applies to community officers, tutors, skills development officers and some admin officers. Within the restructure, Community Safety, Community Assets and Countryside services have joined the service. Community Safety Officers have also been allocated to neighbourhood areas and will be working more closely with the Shared Neighbourhood Teams. The service will continue to operate from all its current neighbourhood bases and neighbourhood learning centres.

EDL 02/04/11 -18 Community Monitors volunteered their time to work on 02/04/11 during the EDL event. The Community Monitors attended 2 briefing sessions prior to the day itself and on the day they worked from 10.00 - 4.30pm. Their role was to initiate conversation with bystanders, building rapport and relationships to reassure people and to de-escalate tensions by using and modelling mediative language and behaviour. Overall, the Community Monitors offered a valuable service on a difficult day for Blackburn and were able to ease tensions and reassure the community both in the town and within the neighbourhoods. The Community monitors were developed from the Good Relations Programme that the Council ran last year. The capacity built through training community mediators provides a resource for the Council and the wider community for the future.

"DON'T BE AFRAID...TO ASK" CONFERENCES – 1200 teenagers came together from nine secondary schools across the borough to ask challenging questions in a series of cohesion meetings at King Georges Hall in March. Keynote speakers from across the sectarian divide in Northern Ireland recounted their struggles with difference leading to violence but ultimately to reconciliation. These were powerful and spellbinding stories which underlined the futility of extremism and the merits of talking to reconcile difference. The conference and preliminary workshops were organised and facilitated by a range of partners through the Discover Mosque project, supported through Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) funding. Conference participants commented on the interesting outcomes from the work and the need to reflect on these to ensure that progression opportunities are in place to build on the work and to improve community relations in our borough.

NEIGHBOURHOOD ENGAGEMENT REVIEW

The Council approved the new engagement structure for neighbourhoods and Communities at the March Executive Board. Officers are now working on a programme of briefings and discussions with agencies and partners to implement the new way of working from May 2011.

TRADING STANDARDS

Trading standards professionals within the Public Protection Service have been in Blackburn Magistrates court on a number of occasions in the recent past: two convictions have been obtained for illegal smoking establishments using shisha pipes, and one conviction relating to the under age supply of tobacco.

The enforcement campaign against under age sales of alcohol has been continuing too, with 10 individuals receiving fixed penalties or being ordered to attend responsible alcohol retailing courses since January 1st . In addition, the Service has participated in the Trading Standards North West survey of children's' attitudes to alcohol and tobacco; this survey provides valuable information about under age drinking in the Borough, and results are expected later in the year.